



The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

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November 14, 2023

Gustavo Torres, Executive Director
CASA de Maryland

Dear Gustavo,

For more than 15 years, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation (Foundation) has been proud to support the essential programs and services CASA de Maryland (CASA) provides immigrant and refugee communities in Maryland. During that time, the Foundation has provided CASA with more than \$5 million in grant funding, including capital grants for two buildings that bear the name of the Foundation's founders. And together, we have helped many fleeing their countries achieve safety and stability and pursue opportunities to build a new life.

However, as we shared with you and your senior team members during a meeting last week, the Foundation is deeply disturbed by the offensive and antisemitic statement that CASA released Monday, November 6, 2023, regarding events in Israel and Gaza. Following that meeting, additional concerns have been raised, including photos posted (and since taken down) of you and other staff members at a recent march. While we support everyone's right to peaceful protest, one of the CASA social media posts celebrated the march with a large sign that read, "from the river to the sea" — words that call for the elimination of the State of Israel and the removal of its Jewish citizens.

As executive director, your decision to align CASA with the objective of those who promote the murder of the Jewish people, and the eradication of the State of Israel, is indefensible. In addition, multiple community leaders, elected officials, and organizations have asked and even insisted CASA make a public apology. As CASA has taken no such action, nor made a full and unqualified retraction of its statement, your silence speaks volumes.

CASA's statement of November 6, 2023, was the first released by the organization almost one month after the October 7 attack by Hamas. It stated: "We strongly support the struggle for decolonization, affirming the rights of Indigenous peoples and historically colonized nations to reclaim their land." This denies Jews as being indigenous to their ancestral homeland, which is antisemitic. Additionally, the statement said, "We deeply acknowledge the interconnectedness of the struggle for the liberation of the Palestinian people and Black and brown communities in the United States." This underscores a lack of knowledge regarding the multicultural and multiracial makeup of the Jewish people, which includes Jews of color.

In a nation where the Jewish population represents 2.4% of the population, yet experiences 55% of hate crimes, it is dangerous to have an organization stand by language that directly fuels antisemitism here at home and globally. Moreover, your words and actions are in conflict with the Foundation's mission,

which includes work in Israel, a country with personal ties to the life and legacy of our founder, Harry Weinberg, and a place where the Foundation has a long-standing commitment to serve Jewish and Arab communities.

The Foundation is not a political organization, and we realize that events in the Middle East leave room for honest discussion, debate, and disagreement. But there is no place in our world, or our community, for hate, and we refuse to support any organization promoting and standing by words of hate. Consequently, the Foundation's leadership has decided to withdraw the \$150,000 final grant payment previously approved for CASA de Maryland for 2024. The Foundation will instead direct those funds to another nonprofit committed to serving refugees and asylum seekers in Maryland. The Foundation has also decided to remove Harry and Jeanette Weinberg's names from the two CASA buildings that the Foundation helped fund and will pay all costs associated with removing this signage.

Finally, the Foundation will not consider future grants to CASA unless and until the organization demonstrates a genuine understanding of the harm that it has caused, including substantive antisemitism training for the board and staff of the organization.

We have shared a long and proud history between our two organizations, and we hope CASA will make strong statements condemning hate and antisemitism with a clear and unqualified apology to the community. We hope you and your leadership and staff will engage meaningfully with the Jewish community and work to repair the real damage that has been done.

Sincerely,



Paula Pretlow, Board Chair and Trustee
The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation



Rachel Garbow Monroe, President and CEO
The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

CC:

Kim Propeack, Chief of Strategy, CASA
Yasmin Viera, Director of Development, CASA
Jesse Steele, Director of Development, CASA in Action
The Board of Directors and Staff of The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation